

Case # C15-2015-0068; The Griffin School

I apologize for not being able to submit to the backup packet. The Griffin school did not respond to the neighbors with pertinent information until after business hours last Friday, August 7.

I remain opposed to the proposed expansion to 125 students unless specific conditions are met to prevent an ongoing danger from vehicle presence.

Because the school has chosen to not pursue the issue unless forced, we simply do not have time to work out the details – much less test for effectiveness- before the board makes a decision.

I do not think it's fair, safe, or appropriate to allow the school to take parking reductions in combination with a variance from the 40' street width.

I have come up with two scenarios the board could mandate which I think are fair to all parties and reasonable.

One scenario is to approve a variance today for only 100 students and require the 22 parking spaces in the lot at Ridgetop to be maintained. Tell Adam that the school can return to the Board to ask for the additional 25 students only after having the parking and traffic control plan worked out with the neighbors, and successfully implemented for a period of 1 year. This would prevent the school from having to expel any currently enrolled students and allow for a modest increase. It would also allow him to proceed with the construction of the new facility he proposes to build.

Another scenario is to grant the 125 students maximum (or the 120 he requested in June and maintains is his "real" number) but to adhere to the parking requirement of 1.5 spaces per teacher plus 1 space for every 2 or 3 upper-division student. Allowing him to use satellite lots for the overage would be OK, providing a busing requirement is included should he secure a lot outside the immediate neighborhood. (Meaning, the Ridgetop spaces currently rented would count, but a lot on North Loop would require him to shuttle students and staff to & from the lot).

I strongly believe that approval of 125 students without a locked-in parking requirement which will transfer to another school when the Griffin School moves on will eventually create an ongoing danger to our community.

The letter the Griffin School has submitted to answer the question of Fire Safety speaks of building safety and of using Martin Ave and 50th St. as apparatus access roads. It does not answer the question the school was instructed to ask regarding limited access when cars are parked on the street.

Texas, including the city of Austin, adheres to the 2009 ICC IFC (International Fire Code)

Section 503.2.1 specifies Dimensions:

Fire apparatus access roads shall have an unobstructed width of not less than 20 feet (6096 mm), exclusive of shoulders, except for approved security gates in accordance with Section 503.6, and an unobstructed vertical clearance of not less than 13 feet 6 inches (4115 mm).

This leaves just 3.5' per side to accommodate street-parked cars before the streets are insufficient for fire apparatus.

Due to the extremely long run of curb along the two frontages of the Martin Site, cars routinely park for the day along the school property. Additionally, cars wait in the street every day to pick students up; often idling for 15-20 minutes.

Comprehensive measures to accommodate and control parking and traffic is absolutely critical. The school is requesting that they be allowed to expand well beyond what our infrastructure was designed to handle. I am not inherently opposed to the expansion, however I am entirely opposed to expansion without strict guidelines in place which will require the Griffin School, or any school which follows the Griffin School, to provide access to adequate parking and carry the burden of traffic control and mitigation.

Urban Core, Ride Sharing, and other parking reductions

The school intends to reduce parking requirements in order to expand enrollment without adding parking spaces, or even requiring that they maintain the rented spaces which currently alleviates street parking.

The streets are too narrow for the school to operate on. That's the reason the variance is required. I'm supportive of the school's use of the property and the variance from the 40' width requirement only under the condition that the variance specifies absolute parking requirements.

I propose that the board adheres to the parking-enrollment schedule mandated in 2010, and disallows the reductions from being applied. This is the only way the number of students the school wishes to enroll will be safely manageable. The board could include the allowance of off-site parking beyond the proximity normally allowed to count towards the requirement, but stipulate that parking farther than 1,000' from any school property line would require shuttling to and from.

What we know from the last 4 years of the school's use of the property:

At approximately 70 students or less, there is not a vehicle presence that routinely causes dangerous conditions.

At approximately 90 students, the 22 additional spaces at Ridgetop Baptist church keeps school parking to a moderate level (5-10 cars every day).

Street parking and congestion will increase if the school is allowed to add students without adding more parking spaces. The Griffin School has proposed an agreement for taking responsibility for managing traffic flow and preventing street parking / waiting. However, this agreement would not be part of the covenant, would not be subject to the bond for suit, would not transfer to the next school that comes in. Additionally, the satellite lot mentioned in the agreement is not required to be maintained. Even if it were, there is no equivalent replacement should they lose access to the Ridgetop lots.

Currently, the Ridgetop spaces are leased year-to-year. Reportedly, there is discussion about going into a long-term lease (term undisclosed). However, again, there is currently NO REQUIREMENT that these spaces are maintained.

Without these spaces, we would already be at daily crises-level street parking with enrollment at 93 students. Our 27' wide streets simply CAN NOT sustain enrollment of 125 without additional parking, whether onsite or offsite.

If the parking requirement which was included in the original variance is included in the variance granting expanded enrollment, and if parking reductions are FORBIDDEN due to the narrowness of the streets, and if the traffic control plan Adam has proposed can be made enforceable through a bond of reasonable amount, I think the school can manage the growth it wants.

If any part of that can not be included in the variance, I don't see any way the school can safely operate above a maximum of 100 students.

In regards to offsite parking: rather than prohibiting parking further than 1,000 feet from the school, I would suggest that any offsite parking beyond 1,000' would require the school to shuttle to and from the lot.

Sincerely,
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